

## Course Outline

**COURSE:** LAWS 1000 Q - Introduction to Legal Studies  
**TERM:** Fall 2009  
**CLASS:** **Day & Time:** Thursday - 10:35am - 12:25 pm  
**Room:** Please check with Carleton Central for current room location  
**Teaching Assistant:**  
**Contact Info:**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Steve Tasson  
**(CONTRACT)**

**CONTACT:** **Office:** D599 LA (Loeb)  
**Office Hrs:** TBA  
**Email:** [stasson@sympatico.ca](mailto:stasson@sympatico.ca)

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"Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must contact a coordinator at the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities to complete the necessary Letters of Accommodation. After registering with the PMC, make an appointment to meet and discuss your needs with me in order to make the necessary arrangements as early in the term as possible, but no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first test requiring accommodations. For further information, please see: [http://www.carleton.ca/pmc/students/accom\\_policy.html](http://www.carleton.ca/pmc/students/accom_policy.html) . If you require accommodation for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodation to PMC by **November 16, 2009 for December examinations** and **March 12, 2010 for April examinations**. For Religious and Pregnancy accommodations, please contact Equity Services, x. 5622 or their website: [www.carleton.ca/equity](http://www.carleton.ca/equity)

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**OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE**

In contemporary societies "the law" is not only the primary mechanism used to resolve disputes, but as importantly, it also defines a significant part of our collective and individual identities and so filters how we understand the world in which we live.. It is therefore an important means through which groups define themselves and the roles and responsibilities they expect from individual members and others. For example, on very basic level, law plays a fundamental role in defining what it means to be a citizen and the rights and responsibilities that are associated with citizenship.

While this can **empower** individuals and provide a strong sense of security and belonging, the processes and consequences of law are not always so benevolent. Therefore we must ask how the legal system, legal practice, legal actors and legal *meanings* also necessarily foster and maintain – rather than alleviate – existing **social inequalities** based on class, race, gender, religion, sexuality, etc.

**These are critical questions.** They are fundamentally questions about what law's role can and should be in society today. To begin to answer them we must first understand the origins of our law (in Canada) and also the processes through which legal decision-making takes place. How are such vital decisions made? Who ultimately makes them and on what authority? What role do everyday citizens play in the processes of legal decision-making and what does this say about the accessibility and accountability of Canada's legal system? Have the answers to any of these questions changed in the (post) post-911 era?

**More big questions we discuss...**

- What is law? How do we know it?
- Must law be moral? Coercive?
- What does it mean to be a citizen?
- Are legal protections accessible to everyone?
- What are the sources of Canadian law?
- How has globalization affected our laws, our rights and our courts?
- What are 'rights' and who has them?
- Who should ultimately make decisions about our rights and their limits?
- Are there more effective alternatives to the current court system?
- Why does law (and esp. Criminal law) regulate some things and not others?
- Can law promote social change or does it merely legitimize inequalities and maintain the status quo?

**COURSE OBJECTIVES** (or, ‘what I want you to get out of the course’)

1. Explore the implications of competing “perspectives of law” and law’s role in contemporary societies.
2. Develop an understanding of the sources of Canadian law and the historical links to, and treatment of, other systems of law and social ordering.
3. Explore the relationship between Charter rights, human rights, and the principle of Parliamentary supremacy.
4. Improve your ability to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of competing written arguments.
5. Investigate the basic components of criminal, public and private law in Canada.
6. Identify and critically evaluate some of the law’s key players, their motivations, and how they affect our understanding of, and outcomes in, the present-day legal system.
7. Explore the relationship between law, “crime” and morality and be capable of reading existing debates and social issues such as obscenity and the limits of freedom of expression through this set of relations.
8. Examine the relationship between law and contemporary theories of citizenship, social inclusion, exclusion, and violence.
9. Improve your ability to communicate ideas and arguments both orally and in writing.
10. Critically assess the potential of employing law (processes, actors, concepts, etc.) in contemporary social and political struggles, movements as well as regulatory projects.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES** (What you want to get out of the course)

1.
2.
3.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Vago, Steven and Adie Nelson. (2008). *Law and Society* (2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian ed.). Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Carleton Department of Law Casebook Group. (2003). *Introduction to Legal Studies* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). North York: Captus Press.

In addition to these two main texts there will be a few other readings for which you will be responsible. These will be available on WebCT.

**Note:** These texts are available from **Octopus Books, 116 Third Ave., Ottawa** (located in “the Glebe”- a 20 minute walk from campus or a short ride on the #7). These books are **NOT** available for this course at the Carleton Bookstore. **Be sure to purchase the correct edition.**

**\*\*The schedule for weekly required readings is available on WebCT\*\***

**COURSE EVALUATION***Fall Term*


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Fall Commentary	10%	(due October 16)
Fall Term Paper	20%	(due November 27)
Mid-year Exam	15%	

*Winter Term*


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Winter Term Paper	20%	(due March 26)
Final Exam	25%	

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Participation	10%	
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**COURSE COMPONENTS**

\*\*\*You must complete **ALL components** of the course to receive a passing grade\*\*\*

**Participation**

Despite the fact that this is a survey lecture course, individual participation is still an important component of the course and part of your mark. Your main opportunity to participate is in the weekly tutorial sessions. **You are expected to contribute to your tutorial discussions and come prepared to discuss assigned readings.** Your participation mark is based on:

- 1) basic attendance to each tutorial;
- 2) your participation in the tutorial and any planned exercises e.g. the preparation of discussion questions;
- 3) your participation in on-line discussions on the course's **WebCT** discussion page. This is an important forum to ask questions and express your ideas. It offers a number of advantages: first, it grants you the time to thoughtfully ask questions or raise concerns. Second, it enables you to contribute to the class even if you do not feel comfortable talking in the lecture or in the tutorial. Third, it allows you to communicate and discuss ideas with the class that we might not be able to address fully in the lectures or in the tutorials.

**How do I get full participation marks?**

1. Ask thoughtful questions.
  2. Show up and be on time.
  3. Keep up with the assigned readings and

**Commentary**

**A commentary is shorter, less formal, and more summary-oriented than a term paper. The commentary in this course is designed to give you a chance to both submit a piece of writing for feedback prior to your term papers and also to explore and discuss a single article from the course in more detail. The commentary will be approx. 5 pages in length and will be evaluated slightly differently than your term papers. As with all course requirements more specifics will be discussed in the lecture and in tutorials.**

**Term Papers**

There are two term papers that ask you to summarize, synthesize and critique (take a position on) some of the material we investigate in the course. These term papers provide you an opportunity to discuss a selection of the readings that we investigate in the course and draw connections to some of the broader questions and themes highlighted in the lectures. Each paper will be a **minimum of 8 pages** in length. The specific questions, due dates and rubrics for evaluation will be discussed in more detail in lecture and in the tutorials. "Outside" research (other than course texts and lectures) will not be required.

**Mid-year & Final Exam**

Likewise there are two exams in the course. Both will be sat during the formally scheduled exam periods in December and April. The dates, times and locations are scheduled by the university. The exams will likely consist of 80-100 multiple-choice questions each; though there may be some short and long answer as well. For the most part multiple-choice exams aim to test the **breadth** of knowledge you have gained in the course rather than the **depth** (this is what your commentary and term-papers are for). More specifics and tips for studying will be discussed closer to the end of each term.

**Some General Guidelines on Assignments for This Course**

*(We will be discussing these requirements in more detail in class or the tutorial)*

**ASSIGNMENT FORMAT**

Any written work submitted in this course **must** be typewritten, double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font with standard 1" margins. All assignments **must** include a title page that has, at minimum, your name and student number, the course code, my name and your tutorial leader's name on it. Assignments are to be stapled in the top left corner and **not put in plastic covers or other bindings**. Title pages, bibliographies and extensive footnotes are not counted in determining an assignment's page length.

**Assignment Format**

Typewritten	<input type="checkbox"/>
12pts Times New Roman	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bibliography	<input type="checkbox"/>
Title page	<input type="checkbox"/>

**LATE POLICY**

Late assignments will be penalized **one full letter grade per day** that they are late (i.e. A- to B-, B- to C-, etc.). Late assignments are to be submitted to the **Law Department's drop box** (Loeb C473) unless otherwise noted. **Never** put them under my door or your tutorial leader's door. Please note as well that **email is not considered an acceptable means of assignment submission.**

**BACKUP COPIES**

Student must retain a **paper hard copy** of anything submitted for a grade in the class. This hard copy should be kept for at least 3 months following the end of the course in case there is any discrepancy in final grades. In the very unlikely event that a submitted assignment is misplaced, you must be able to produce another copy upon request.

**REFERENCING & PLAGARISM**

The assignments in the course must be properly referenced and include a bibliography of all sources used in the preparation of the assignment. You will discuss acceptable citation style in some detail in your tutorial group. **Failure to reference properly or attempting to pass someone else's ideas or work off as your own is considered plagiarism.** I take it very seriously and so should you. Plagiarism can lead to penalties that range from failure of the course to expulsion. For more info, see the university's official policy.

**A series of tubes...**

The internet is both your friend and your enemy. While it may be a useful resource in the initial stages of research or even provide access to books or journals, it may be tempting to rely on, or even "liberally borrow," information found there to complete assignments. This is a problem because such practices may constitute plagiarism, but also because information found online may not be accurate (~"peer reviewed") and may in fact unduly complicate or undermine your own arguments. Wikipedia is often a brick not a life-raft.